



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

September 1, 2006

**DEFENDANT SENTENCED FOR ROLE IN
CONSPIRACY TO OPERATE HOUSES OF PROSTITUTION**

Tampa, FL - United States District Judge James D. Whittemore today sentenced FRANCISCO MARIANO-CEPEDA to a sentence of 30 months imprisonment, to be followed by a term of 3 years of supervised release. He also imposed a fine on MARIANO-CEPEDA of \$6,000.00. This defendant pled guilty on May 9, 2006 to a charge of conspiring to persuade and entice persons to travel in interstate commerce in order to facilitate the crime of prostitution.

According to the indictment and the plea agreement, the defendant owned and operated a number of houses of prostitution in the Tampa Bay area in the period between January, 2000 and October, 2005. These houses of prostitution, sometimes called "21 houses", catered to Hispanic clients and utilized the services of mostly Hispanic women who worked there as prostitutes. Many of these women came to the Tampa Bay area from other states or from outside of the United States to work at these houses of prostitution and most of the prostitutes themselves were not legal aliens. This

defendant was one of eleven persons named in an indictment which the United States filed in June, 2005.

This case was investigated by the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jay L. Hoffer of the Tampa Division.

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